United Nations S/2003/520

Security Council

Distr.: General
2 May 2003

Original: English

Letter dated 1 May 2003 from the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit herewith the text of a statement by the official spokesman of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation issued on 30 April 2003 regarding the approval of a new Cabinet in the Palestinian National Authority.

I would be grateful if the text of the present letter and its annex were distributed as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Sergey **Lavrov**

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Annex to the letter dated 1 May 2003 from the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

[Original: Russian]

Statement by the official representative of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, A. V. Yakovenko, in connection with the approval of the new composition of the government of the Palestinian National Authority

The Palestinian Legislative Council, which is the highest elective body of the Palestinian National Authority, has approved the new composition of the government of the Palestinian National Authority, headed by Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen).

Moscow welcomes this important event and considers that it opens up a qualitatively new stage both in the democratic-reform process in the Palestinian National Authority and in Palestinian-Israeli relations. The introduction of the post of Prime Minister and the approval of the Cabinet presented by him remove the existing obstacles impeding the implementation of the "road map" for a Middle East settlement drawn up by the Quartet of international mediators, which represents a carefully thought out plan for making progress towards peace.

This document, which defines the point of departure for Palestinian-Israeli negotiations, their framework, including a timetable, and the ultimate objective, is designed to be a practical guide to action for the Palestinians and the Israelis. As is well known, it charts the path to the creation, within three years, of an independent, sovereign Palestinian State, which will coexist side by side with Israel in conditions of peace and security. It is believed that the implementation of this programme of action can lead not only to a Palestinian-Israeli settlement, but also to a comprehensive Arab-Israeli settlement on the basis of the Madrid principles, the "land for peace" formula, Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973), and 1397 (2002), the agreements and understandings reached earlier by the sides, and also the initiative of Saudi Prince Abdallah endorsed at the Beirut Summit of the League of Arab States.

With the approval of the Palestinian Government, the first phase of the "road map" has in fact begun. Now, the parties face other major tasks. The Palestinians and the Israelis must resume cooperation in the field of security in order to put an end to violence, terrorism and incitement. Furthermore, Israel must take all possible steps to help normalize the lives of the Palestinians and, above all, withdraw its troops from the Palestinian territories reoccupied after 28 September 2000. This will create the conditions for holding Palestinian national and municipal elections, which will serve to consolidate democratic principles and establish new legitimate structures of the future Palestinian State.

The Russian Federation reaffirms its commitment to the obligations of the Quartet of international mediators on the question of assisting the implementation of the "road map", including help with direct contacts between the conflicting sides. We are prepared to ensure the closest coordination of actions with the Palestinians

and the Israelis in order to overcome the Palestinian-Israeli confrontation and advance towards a comprehensive Middle East settlement.

30 April 2003